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Training Need of Agricultural Input Dealers in Transfer of Agricultural Technology

Rajni Agashe, D R Agashe, S R Dhuware and S L Waskel

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Surguja (Chhattisgarh)

ABSTRACT

In India, there are about 2.82 lakh practicing agri-input dealers, who are the prime source of farm information to the farming community. The first contact point for majority of farmers is the agri-input dealer. During purchasing different inputs required for farming operations, the farmer naturally tries to find out from the input dealer about the usage of inputs, both in terms of quality and quantity. However, most of these input dealers do not have formal agricultural education. If these input dealers can be shaped as para-extension professionals by providing requisite knowledge then they can professionalize extension services and contribute to bring a paradigm shift in Indian Agriculture. It is in this context, one-year diploma course entitled Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) imparts relevant and location-specific agricultural education to equip input dealers with knowledge to transform them into para-extension professionals enabling them to address the day-to-day problems being faced by the farmers at field level. In rainfed faming state of Chhattisgarh, agro input dealers play vital role in farm production. Input dealers can contribute towards strengthening agriculture extension system through creation sound technological linkage with farmers. So, it is very essential to know the knowledge level of input dealers with modern crop production technologies including agro machinery. Present study was conducted during 2016-18 in Surguja district of Northern hill region of Chhattisgarh to prioritize need for training of agro-input dealers. Through personnel interview of 40 retailers, 47.5 % were young (36-45 yr), and 35 % were graduates. Training in computer and its application with record keeping software was another preferred area. For dealers the major problems faced is the lack of knowledge of new product (90 %), Lack of knowledge of maintenance of stock (87.5 %), Non availability of bank loan (82.5 %), fluctuation of selling season (80 %) followed by lack of capital and need based training (77.5 %) .

Key Words: Agriculture, Entrepreneur, Rainfed, Record keeping, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a steady transformation of Indian agriculture from the food-deficit subsistence farming to food-self-sufficient commercial farming. Modern technologies, dedicated efforts of Indian farmers and the programmatic support of Central and State governments have all contributed significantly for the current land mark (2014) achievement of 264.77 MT of food production. However, for sustaining this growth rate and achieving the required food grain production, multi-prolonged strategy, including effective and efficient farm information delivery mechanism is required. As such, efforts are underway to proactively integrate private sector companies, farmers' organizations, agripreneurs, NGOs, cooperatives and other agencies in the non-governmental sector, including practicing input dealers, into the extension delivery mechanism. Raahalya and Sreedaya (2021) observed that job satisfaction, scientific orientation and facilities at training center were having positive and significant relationship with the training need of Agricultural Officers in agricultural practices and extension.

Corresponding Author's Email: rajniagashe@gmail.com

Table 1. Socio-economic profile of the agri-input dealers. (N=40)

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	Young (< 35 yr)	14	35.0
	Middle (36-45 yr)	19	47.5
	Old age (> 6 yr)	7	17.5
	Up to VIII standard	3	7.5
Education	High school	7	17.5
	(X^{th}) Higher	10	25.0
	Secondary Graduate	14	35.0
	PG and above	5	12.5
Experience	Low (0-4 yr)	5	12.5
	Medium (5-15 yr)	23	57.5
	High (16 -25 yr)	12	30

In India, there are about 2.82 lakh practicing agri-input dealers, who are the prime source of farm information to the farming community. The first contact point for majority of farmers is the agri-input dealer. Hence, it is very essential to know the knowledge level of input dealers about modern crop production technologies including agro machinery.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) D has been designed in such a way that the input dealer can pursue the program without adversely affecting his day-to-day business. The program is spread over a period of 48 weeks, with 40 classroom sessions and 8 field visits to various institutions and farmers' fields. The classroom sessions and field visits were conducted on sunday or market holidays. The field visits were intended to acquaint the input dealers with location-specific field problems and expose them to relevant technologies. They are trained to identify pests, diseases and nutritional disorders. Study material in local language is provided and multi-media instructional devices are used in the classrooms.

All the stakeholders involved in DAESI program *i.e.,* the input dealers, resource persons, facilitators, institutions capable of delivering the program viz. ATMAs, KVKs, NGOs, Agrl. Colleges etc. are located at district level. The cropping pattern, the package of practices and the field visits were location-specific. Hence, decentralized approach was adopted to cover 300 batches per year. Each batch comprised of 40 input dealers. The study was conducted during 2016-17 and 2017-18 in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh. total 40 agro- input dealer/retailers were selected randomly from the district. Respondents were surveyed through personnel interview using pretested structured interview schedule. Different data *viz.,* socio-economic profile of the Agri- input dealers , training required for sale improvement of inputs, specific crop, pest and management, constraints, computer application , type of business , most preferred input and Increase of business were rated by the respondents on three point scale as Most needed, Needed and Not needed. Training need was measured by computing the weighted mean score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic profile of the Agri-input dealers

The socio-economic profile of the agri-input dealers such as age, education and experience to join DAESI were analyzed. It was evident that majority (47.5%) of the respondents belongs to

Table 2. Training needs in crop specific management.

Training areas	Most needed	Needed	Not needed
Rice	32	8	
Wheat	28	8	4
Maize	31	9	
Potato	29	10	1
Litchi	27	10	3
Mango	30	8	2
Strawberry	31	5	4

young age 36-45 yr and 35 per cent dealers were graduates. Majority of input dealers (57.5) were possessing medium experience followed by high (30) and low (12.5) level of experience respectively. (Table 1).

Training needs in crop specific management

The data (Table 2) show that training needs in crop specific management were Most Needed for crops namely rice, maize, strawberry, mango, potato, wheat and litchi and Needed for crops namely potato, litchi, maize rice, wheat mango, strawberry whereas Not Needed, for crops namely wheat, strawberry, litchi, mango and potato.

The training needs of the agro input dealers in ICT

The training needs of the agro input dealers in ICT areas were application of computer for record keeping, record keeping software having most needed followed by use of computer, internet and E-mail, Scanning.

Problems faced by Input Dealers

For dealers the major problems faced is the lack of knowledge of new product (90 %), lack of knowledge of maintenance of stock (87.5), non-availability of bank loan (82.5%) fluctuation of selling season (80 %) ,lack of capital and Need based training (77.5 %) .

Perception of Input Dealers about DAESI Program

Perception of trained input dealers to various perception items about DAESI program such as topics covered, study material, resource person respectively were collected and analyzed

The values (Table 5) show that most of the input dealers who have undergone DAESI program have the feeling that the topics covered in classroom, study material, field visits conducted were most relevant to them. Similarly, 95 per cent of respondents have felt that the quality of resource persons in delivering the sessions was very good,

Table 3. Training needs in computer application

Sr. No.	Training area	Most needed	Needed	Not needed
1.	Record keeping	37	3	
2.	Record keeping Software	37	3	
3.	Computer	32	8	
4.	Internet	33	7	
5.	E-mail, Scanning	35	5	

Table 4. Problems faced by Input Dealers.

Sr. No.	Statement	No.	Percentage
1.	Lack of capital	31	77.5
2.	Non availability of bank loan	33	82.5
3.	Fluctuation of selling season	32	80
4.	Transportation cost	29	72.5
5.	Lack of extension approach	28	70
6.	Need based training	31	77.5
7.	Lack of knowledge of maintenance of stock	35	87.5
8.	Lack of technical knowledge of new product	36	90
9.	Departmental cooperation	29	72.5

Table 5.Perception of Input Dealers about DAESI Program . (N-40)

Sr. No.	Perception Item	Category	Number	Per cent
1.	Relevance of the topics covered in classroom	Most relevant	37	92.5
		Relevant	3	7.5
2.	Relevance of study material	Most relevant	35	87.5
		Relevant	5	12.5
3.	Relevance of the field visits conducted	Most relevant	36	90
		Relevant	4	10
4.	Quality of resource persons in delivering the sessions	Very good	38	95
		Good	2	5
5.	Classroom sessions	Very good	36	90
		Good	4	10
6.	Visit of research stations	Very good	38	95
		Good	2	10
7.	Visit to labs	Very good	34	85
		Good	6	15
8.	Visit to Farmers field	Very good	36	90
		Good	4	10
9.	Facilities in the classroom	Very good	35	87.5
		Good	5	12.5
10	Assessment of program	Very good	38	95
		Good	2	10

class room session (90 %), visit of research station (95 %), visit of lab (85%), visit of farmers' field (90 %) , facilities in the classroom (87.5 %), assessment of program (95 %) of respondents.

Table 6 evaded that majority of the respondents have gained knowledge in crop production technologies (77.5 %), gained knowledge in pest disease management (92.5 %), gained knowledge in soil health management (95 %), gained knowledge

Table 6. Change in knowledge level of trained participants.

Sr. No.	Statement	Category	Number	Per cent
1.	Gained knowledge in crop production technologies	Fully	31	77.5
		Partially	9	22.5
2.	Gained knowledge in pest disease management	Fully	37	92.5
		Partially	3	7.5
3.	Gained knowledge in soil health management	Fully	38	95
		Partially	2	5
4.	Gained knowledge in water management	Fully	36	90
		Partially	4	10
5.	Overall knowledge and skill gained in DAESI program to give advice to the field level problems of farmers	Fully	34	85
		Partially	6	15

Table 7. Perceived Impact of DAESI program

Sr. No.	Category	Number	Per cent
1.	Gained confidence in technology dissemination	40	100
2.	Not gained confidence in technology dissemination	0	0
3.	Customer base after DAESI program Increased	37	92.5
	Not Increased	3	7.5
4.	Extent of increase in customer base after DAESI program		
	Up to 10%	4	10
	11-15 %	0	0
	16-25	4	10
	26-50	13	32.5
	More than 50%	19	47.5

in water management (90 %) and overall knowledge and skill gained in DAESI program to give advice to the field level problems of farmers (85%).

Perceived Impact of DAESI program

The data in table 7 revealed that after DAESI program gained confidence in technology dissemination (100 %), customer base after DAESI program increased (92. %) and extent of increase in customer base after DAESI program from 10 to 47.5 per cent.

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